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William Roscoe

An Inaugural Lecture

tion to the Andrew Geddes and John Rankin Chair
Modern History in the University of Liverpool

BY

Ramsay Muir, M.A.

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1906

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FIVE years ago the late Miss Elizabeth Geddes, with pious generosity, commemorated her brother and life-long companion, Mr. Andrew Geddes, by the institution of a Lectureship, which the University devoted to the subject of Modern History. This Lectureship I have held since its foundation, performing substantially the same work which I shall now continue, so that I stand to-day in a somewhat unusual position. In the summer of this year, Mr. John Rankin's munificence (of which this University has had so many evidences) doubled the endowment, and so enabled the transformation of the Lectureship into a Chair, and my own elevation to the professorial dignity. If I permit myself to see in the form which Mr. Rankin's gift assumed an element of personal kindliness as well as of public munificence, it is because, like many of my colleagues, I owe to him already so many kindnesses that it is a pleasure to feel that I owe him yet one more, and this the greatest; I mean that he has placed me in a position which I may hope so to utilise that he may derive some satisfaction from the outcome of his generosity.

But the peculiarity of my position resides not only in the fact that I have been doing the work of my Chair for five years past, but also in the fact that, as I am proud to claim, I am the first graduate of this University to be raised to a Chair in it. When I look back over the seventeen years which have passed since I entered this place as a timid freshman, I find it impossible to express the magnitude of my obligations to my Alma Mater. Her latest boon is this, that she permits me to serve her in an office which, during all these years, it has been my secret ambition to fill. I am not, therefore, appearing before you as a new-comer before an

audience of strangers. Among you
who are my friends, many who are or h
pupils, some who have been my fell
some who are my tried colleagues,
who were years ago my teachers. To
colleagues and friends I cannot, in th
attempt to express my acknowledgn
less may I try to say what I owe to
them who was especially my teach
since been most intimately my co
who is now, as he has always been,
friend and counsellor. But you will un
under these circumstances I am dep
ordinary resource of a professorial i
cannot, like a new-comer, speak to yo
in which history ought to be taug
University as ours, or of the meth
propose to follow. For there will b
in these methods as a result of my pro
if there were to be changes, it woul
my part to announce them.

Since, then, I am not to spend
looking to the future, I may follow
instinct of the historian, which bids
the past. And I can do so with the
ness, because a historical student,
work in Liverpool, finds many exampl
and inspire him. For more than a cen
studies have been cultivated in this ci
uity and distinction. The history of
has engaged the labours of a host
workers, from Matthew Gregson and
down through Thomas Baines and
and Sir James Picton, to the active
our own day, whose number is so co
I must not try to name them. The

the work of these devoted workers in the field of local history is a perpetual stimulus and challenge to a historical teacher, and one cannot wish better for our University than that such workers should associate themselves with it in the most intimate way possible, utilise its resources, and co-operate in its work.

But it is not only local history which has been successfully studied in this city. Citizens of Liverpool in the past have made great and valuable contributions to the history of England and of Europe. I do not now speak of pure scholars, more or less accidentally connected with Liverpool, like Bishop Lightfoot, who, though he received his schooling in this city, spent the whole of his active life elsewhere; his splendid contributions to the history of the Christian church were the product of Cambridge, and cannot in any sense be claimed for Liverpool. But I think of men who found time for historical studies in the midst of the engrossing and exacting claims of a great city; who had their own professions to pursue, and ranked high in them; who did their share, and more than their share, of public service, and who still contrived to produce original historical work of high value. Two names, names full of inspiration for any Liverpool student, will have risen in your minds. One is that of Charles Beard, to whom this University owes a debt that can never be adequately acknowledged. A great preacher, he was for many years the unfailing advocate of every good cause in the city of his adoption, and gave freely of his time for public service. He, more than any other single man, was the inspirer of the movement which led to the foundation of University College just five and twenty years ago. In days when the

practical man was hard to persuade of
such an institution, his strenuous ar
advocacy and his wise counsel and lea
of untold value. It needed the stro
fine tact and the practical sagacity
Rathbone to turn the dream into a
the dream would never have been r
for Charles Beard. Yet, in the mids
demands upon him, Charles Beard r
carry on laborious studies in history, a
two ambitious books by which he
remembered. His life of Luther is
sanest and most sympathetic estim
volcanic figure. His 'History of P
the best book in English upon that gr
scholars and thinkers, with whose t
found himself deeply in sympathy.
that work so admirable should have
a man with so little leisure for resea
so little command over the elabora
of books and materials which mod
scholarship demands. One may wo
might not have achieved had he de
more exclusively to historical studies
the cause of the College and other ca
he laboured, to work themselves ou
assistance. But I doubt if his wor
gained so much as to compensate for
would have lost. Indeed, his publ
was a training for his historical wor
and balanced judgment of men anc
unfailing sympathy with noble cau
with a tolerant comprehension of th
retarded them, could only have be
the school of experience, in actual pu
History is the record of the aspiration

ments of societies, whose members are drawn this way and that by a thousand cross-currents, interests, prejudices, crude philosophies. To attain to the truth of it, it is necessary not only to be skilled in the marshalling of evidence, to be learned in the interpretation of documents; it is necessary also to be learned in the strange illogical workings of the human mind, and to know as by instinct how compromises work out from the clash of interests or intelligences. No amount of study in the closet will ever teach that; but only experience. I venture to assert that no historian of the first rank, from Herodotus and Thucydides down to Mommsen, has ever been a mere student of the closet. The closet historian may be vastly more learned, but he lacks the clue to interpret his own knowledge. The historian must be a publicist in a greater or less degree, or he will misread the characters and events with which he deals. More than that, he cannot have the true inspiration of the historian, his passionate interest in the conduct of societies of men and in the process of human amelioration, without being driven to participate in political activities of one sort or another. He must be a publicist because he is a historian; and he will be the better historian because he is a publicist.

It would be both pleasant and profitable if I might stop to analyse the work of Charles Beard in detail; for it well deserves such attention. But my business to-day is with an earlier citizen of Liverpool; one who did work even more remarkable than Beard's, and did it in circumstances still less favourable, one who is not only the greatest of Liverpool historians, but in some aspects the greatest of Liverpool citizens, and a still more remarkable example than Charles Beard of that admirable

combination of the historian and
spirited man of affairs, in whom eacl
interests reflects illumination and sign
the other. It is indeed a privilege f
student in Liverpool to be able to loo
predecessors so inspiring; and they w
a perpetual discipline for humility if
his opportunities against theirs, and hi
against theirs.

William Roscoe was born in 17
throw from this building. His fathe
tavern, to which a bowling green wa
Mount Pleasant. Mount Pleasant t
its name; and the bowling green,
down over pleasant green slopes to
roofs of the town and the network o
the river edge, was a favourite reso
evenings of the sedater kind of townsr
date Liverpool was already the thir
second, port in England; a thriving
20,000 souls, proud that she was
distance Bristol in the struggle for t
the slave trade. She had enjoyed
steady advance; but she was on the e
of stupendous and bewildering grow
to be brought about by the rise
industries of Lancashire and by the
of America. The great changes w
these events completely transforme
Shipping multiplied so that docks
built fast enough. Sailors of all nati
turbulent crowd, often difficult to k
peopled her wharves. A vast new pop
in: some to make fortunes and live in l
dwell in sordid conditions in the a

which rose on the outskirts of the town to north and south, and with which we have been struggling ever since. The old forms of borough government broke down, and the town was helpless to adapt itself to its new conditions, and to perform its duty of providing the means of a humane existence for its citizens—all the more helpless because few realised the magnitude of what was going on. These vast changes were all brought about during the life of William Roscoe, and the sight of them, though he did not know it, determined his character and opinions. He saw his birthplace develope from a busy and prosperous town into a vast, wealthy and hideous city. He saw it almost win the commercial leadership of the world, but he saw little sign of commerce bringing civilisation or beauty in its train. He saw wealth and luxury increasing at an amazing rate, but he saw also misery increasing side by side with it, and still more rapidly. And the effect upon a quick intelligence, upon a mind which naturally turned to justice and beauty, was twofold. He turned for his delight to an age and a city in which commerce nourished beauty; and, being a strenuous soul, never content with his own pleasures, and unable to divorce his intellectual from his practical interests, he threw himself with ardour into every scheme which promised to make Liverpool and England more like Florence and Italy. Those are the two aspects of Roscoe's life which make it worth studying. The historian in him cannot be considered apart from the citizen. His career thus forms an exceptionally good illustration of one of the many fruits of historical studies—the stimulus which they afford to a healthy civic spirit; and it is mainly from this point of view that I propose to treat my theme.

In the years of Roscoe's boyhood, L
not the nightmare place which it be
beginning of the nineteenth centur
thriving port, exhilarated and engrosse
prosperity, thrusting out with mor
assurance to seize upon the trade of all
world, it was a vigorous and healthy p
but its townsmen had little thought to
amenities of life. It was not a promi
the development of a boy of parts. S
intellectual interests regarded, that t
public library of any kind except a sm
collection, kept in a room in North
The old grammar school, founded in
century, was soon to be extinguished
lands which constituted its endowme
merged in the Corporation estate, a
Council went on paying only the i
they had yielded two centuries befor
was now wholly inadequate. No
educational institutions existed at
Roscoe was sent to a small private sch
Street, where he learnt to read and v
much more. His formal education
age of twelve, when he returned t
market garden which his father h
Mount Pleasant, and to carry potatoes
on his head to the market. But al
acquired intellectual tastes, which he p
and after his long day's work, an
that these full days of physical and
were the happiest of his life. It is
that he is said to have been an excepti
salesman. Roscoe never despised any
to do, and never allowed his dear
interfere with his necessary drudge

age of fifteen he entered a solicitor's office. His apprenticeship to the law lasted five years, and during its course he made himself so competent a lawyer that when, in his twentieth year, he started on his own account, he was able from the first to pay his own way, to indulge his hobbies in moderation, and after eight years to acquire a sufficient competence not only to marry but to support his father and mother. Clearly a very meritorious example of the industrious apprentice, who deserved to succeed. Roscoe, indeed, was always as free from the fractious, self-pitying, self-flattering temper of the average literary person as Sir Walter Scott himself.

But assiduously though he attended to his business, young Roscoe never for a moment regarded it as the most important thing in his life. It was only a means to enable him to live humanely; and the keynote of his whole life and of his service to his native town is struck in some sincere though stilted and commonplace lines among the conscientious verses with which he amused himself in these years. 'Ah! why,' he cries with all the solemnity of nineteen years of age—

> Ah! why, ye sons of wealth, with ceaseless toil,
> Add gold to gold, and swell the shining pile?
> Your general course to happiness ye bend,
> Why then, to gain the means, neglect the end?
> To purchase peace requires a scanty store;
> Oh, spurn the grovelling wish that pants for more!

This trite sentiment has been often expressed, but in this case it has the merit of having been lived up to by its writer. All this sounds, I admit, a little priggish; but I don't think the lad was a prig, though he took himself very seriously, as all decent lads do at his age. He found out a group of youths of

like interests; two of whom desei
One was a lad of fifteen, Francis Ho
amazing gift of tongues, who was tea
Latin, French and Italian in his u
Holden inspired Roscoe and his other
enthusiasm for these languages; and
mornings before work they met to read t
Before Roscoe was twenty, he had th
competent reading knowledge of thr
and was revelling in Horace and still m
Already his greatest delight was in th
literature of Italy, and the subject o
best book, Lorenzo de Medici, was w
back of his mind. Another of his ear
a young engraver employed at a pot
the town, from whom Roscoe learnec
through whose influence he was cap
enthusiasm for the fine arts which v
dominating passions throughout his
age of twenty, this enthusiasm led h
of the founders of a Society for the E
of the Arts of Painting and Design, w
in 1773, was the first public organisa
pool for artistic purposes. It had b
and the deadness of his own towns
drove back the young enthusiast with
to revel in the age when bankers a
valued their wealth largely because
they could buy with it.

It was mainly by the exploration
age of Florence, and by the study o
on which he wrote several essays, th
his soul alive during the years of har
he was establishing his fortune. I
means confined his interests to the
lover of poetry, he was perpetually t

on translations from the Italian, or imitations of his favourite poets, Shenstone and Goldsmith. A long poem, entitled 'Mount Pleasant,' published in his twenty-fourth year, attracted the warm praise of some competent critics, among them Sir Joshua Reynolds, and Mason the friend of Gray and Horace Walpole. It is difficult for the modern reader to see quite what were the qualities which called forth the enthusiasm of these critics: the lines are stiff, pedantic eighteenth-century stuff. But they have a double interest. They show the mind of the young student at work on the character of his own town; and they are interesting also because they contain a protest against the iniquity of the African slave trade. It needed a high courage for a struggling young lawyer to attack a trade on which many of the wealthiest of his fellow townsmen had built their fortunes, and which was considered to be the foundation of the prosperity of Liverpool. Throughout his life, however, Roscoe was always ready to take any risks in the struggle against this iniquity. In 1787 he published a long and vigorous poem on the wrongs of Africa. In the same year a powerful pamphlet on the slave trade brought him much unpopularity in Liverpool, and dragged him into a fierce controversy with the Rev. Raymond Harris, who had published a nauseous scriptural defence of the slave-trade, for which he was formally thanked by the Liverpool Corporation.

When the French Revolution broke out, its glowing promise captivated Roscoe, as it captivated all the most generous spirits. An Ode to the People of France and two or three vigorous songs in praise of Liberty expressed his delight; he ventured also, in a couple of pamphlets, to couch his lance against the great Burke in defence of the French cause, and

plunged himself into electioneering w
pool. Henceforward he is one of the l
on the liberal side in Liverpool politic
him in frequent correspondence witl
downe and other leading Whigs. Ir
repression and reaction which followe
of war, Roscoe never wavered in h
more generous ideas, though the
unpopular and even dangerous, abov
which, through its connexion with t
was wedded to the reactionary pa
was the embitterment of feeling, that
four Liverpool weekly papers dared
letters or contributions from the
impiously opposed the repression c
speech, or supported the atheistica
of a reform of Parliament. A small l
which Roscoe and a group of his frier
for the discussion of Italian literatu
abandoned because of the universa
'seditious meetings.' For a few yea
to withdraw from active politics, tl
tinued to follow them with profoun
wrote more than one vigorous polit
He found a vent for his superabu
in a great scheme for draining the
Moss, in the scientific study of b
the gradual accumulation of a fin
books and pictures. It was durin
also, that his long and delightful stu
history and literature bore fruit in
of his first and best book, the 'Life
Medici,' issued in three volumes

The book was at once amazin
though it came from an unknown
business in a 'remote commercial

critic put it, 'where nothing is heard of but Guinea ships, slaves, blacks and merchandise.' Horace Walpole, the great critic and arbiter of taste, now an old and frail man, wrote, on receiving the first volume, that he had not 'enjoyed so much and such unexpected pleasure for a long time,' and could only hope that the second volume would come very soon, lest it should be too late for 'a very infirm man of seventy-six, who has no hope of being so well amused as he should be by reading the completion of this work.' Lord Lansdowne retired to the country in order that he might enjoy it in seclusion. Lord Bristol wrote to the publisher to ask where Roscoe lived, and 'what present of books, pictures, or statuary might be most welcome to him.' The book became the fashion, and the booksellers could not be supplied quickly enough with copies. It was the universal opinion that in Roscoe a new classic had appeared, and most people preferred him to Gibbon. His work was translated into French, German, and Italian, and Italian scholars in especial chorussed its praise, acclaiming it as the noblest tribute to the genius of Italy that had ever been published.

There is something a little extravagant in these laudations, which the modern reader of the book finds hard to understand. But no enthusiasm can be too great to celebrate such an achievement by a man in active business, with a keen interest in politics, and a hundred other interests besides. The modern reader cannot share the thrill of delight with which the book was welcomed by contemporaries. But it is still a live enough book to deserve serious examination; and it is yet more interesting to discover from it the sources of the enthusiasm which made Roscoe so valuable a

citizen. I cannot pretend to criticise
authority or in detail, for the period
which I have any intimate or origi
But there are some aspects of Rosco
stand forth clearly enough to any one
acquaintance with more modern work

In any historical work of serious pr
are two aspects equally demanding
the scientific and the artistic. It wa
of an earlier age to lay almost excl
on the artistic aspect; it is the not l
tendency of our own age to lay al
emphasis on the scientific aspect.
either is fatal to the permanent val
work, because the neglect of either is
Roscoe's weakness, like that of all
of his age except Gibbon, is on the
It is true he did the best he could
materials. He exhausted the pri
known to him; and though his busin
to visit Italy himself, his friend, W
one of his group of youthful intima
to the main Florentine libraries a
great mass of useful material. On o
subject he may be said to have ha
supply of materials—namely, on Lo
connexions and interests, and the gr
and artists who surrounded him.
most interested him. But on the ba
main theme he was less well equi
social and political state of Italy an
the conditions which produced t
efflorescence of art and learning, o
the strange moral relaxation whic
the Renascence—he had insufficie
The result is that his picture of L

circle stands out rather isolated from its natural surroundings, and in a somewhat false light. Roscoe was conscientious in the use of his facts: he is careful to give chapter and verse for every important statement. But he was scarcely able to estimate the elements of error in his authorities, and was apt to be rather uncritical in the use of them. That was not wholly his fault. He was almost an explorer in one of the most difficult epochs of history, and he lacked wholly the advantage which the historian of almost any period now possesses—that of using the results of a long and patient sifting of sources carried on by other scholars guided by well established criteria of evidence. And when all is said, his work was, even on the scientific side, much in advance of the average historical writing of his age. He at any rate made use of a great mass of new material, and was the first to give anything like a just account of a glorious period. As for his artistic presentment, there is much vividness in his picture of the artistic and learned life of the court of Lorenzo, and Lorenzo himself, though much idealised, stands forth a living enough figure. The readers of this book found themselves introduced by an enthusiast to a very lively and intimate contact with a group of keen minds concerned about fine issues; and that accounts for their delight.

But the most valuable thing in the book is the glow of enthusiasm with which it is written. It is confessedly a piece of hero-worship, and though this detracts from its trustworthiness, it adds in some aspects to its interest. Lorenzo had been Roscoe's prime hero since his boyhood; he confesses that, in his eyes, Lorenzo was the greatest man who ever lived. The biographer had received an immense

inspiration from his subject, and the
intended first as the tribute of
secondly as a means of sharing w
inspiration its writer had enjoyed.
made Lorenzo Roscoe's hero, and,
model, was the fact that, being a gr
commerce, and a statesman immers
duct of public affairs, successfully go
and prosperous state, he yet cont
neglecting those duties, to cultivate
point his own intelligence, to keep
to the best thought and the noblest
and to be the most generous pa
scholars and philosophers because he
their contribution to the welfare
man was of more moment than all t
his own vast commercial enterprises.
model well worthy to be set before
the growing wealth of England, an
Florence of Lorenzo, was a poign
Roscoe's own Liverpool, which was
take, in commerce, just such a posit
had once held.

It may be convenient to deal at
remainder of Roscoe's historical wo
after the publication of the Lorenz
four volumes, a life of Lorenzo's s
Pope under whom the Reformati
whose devotion to art and letters
appear almost frivolous in his positi
of issues of such magnitude. Ro
persuaded, rather unwillingly, to atte
the natural sequel to its predecessor,
the civilisation of Renascence Ital
brilliant moment just before it wa
the acrid strife of rival doctrines.

a harder one, and the writer was inspired by no such devotion to his subject as had given life to his previous work. The range, too, of the new theme was much wider: the austere and militant temper of German Protestantism had to be rendered over against the gaiety and beauty of Italy; while now that Italy had become, what Lorenzo had saved it from becoming, the cockpit in which were fought out the rivalries of the European powers, a knowledge of the whole of Europe was necessary which was far beyond Roscoe's scope. For these reasons the weakest aspects of his previous work were inevitably greatly accentuated in its successor; and though there was much that was akin to him in the pursuits to which Leo would fain have devoted himself, the book could not have the unity and homogeneity of the Lorenzo. It had a large sale; it brought him more money than the Lorenzo; but it was not so good a book. It was even the object of bitter attack in several quarters; though the attack (as is generally the case with popular criticism) was irrelevant, and was directed mainly against the author's treatment of the Reformation, in which he had presumed to see some flaws. A volume of illustrations and further materials for the life of Lorenzo, issued in 1820, completes the tale of Roscoe's historical work. It is not large in bulk; and it is now, for the facts of his period, largely superseded. But its spirit is still valuable; and greater than the books were the works of public service in which, during the second half of his life, Roscoe exemplified that spirit to his fellow citizens.

Between the publication of the Lorenzo and that of the Leo, the diligence in business which Roscoe had always combined with fervency of

spirit had reaped its reward, and he
to retire on a competent fortune
house at Allerton. He had now t
the leisure to indulge his generous ta
and his interests, like his hero's, kn
art, letters, politics, science, he thre
them all, and made himself respecte
too, having abundant leisure, he be
those schemes for the intellectual
Liverpool, which were to earn
reputation of being the Lorenzo o
But his leisure did not long remain
All his schemes and studies, as
composition of his second book,
in upon in 1799 by the call to
the precarious affairs of a private l
to his friend William Clarke. By pr
measures the danger to the bank's cre
and his friend's fortune saved; b
had proved so valuable as to be ind
with a sigh of regret he gave up t
learned leisure, and undertook the
large banking business. For a few y
of the bank occupied almost all his ti
came years of steady and quiet p
Roscoe could show to his fellow
exhibition of the ways in which affl
made fruitful. His house at Allert
by many of the ablest and most sinc
age in all branches of human activity
Dr. Parr; men of letters like Dr.
daughter, Mrs. Barbauld; botanists
artists like Fuseli and Gibson;
Brougham; agricultural reformers lil
Holkham; while in Liverpool itsel
the centre of a group of cultivated an

including Dr. Currie, the biographer of Burns, William Rathbone, and Dr. Traill. They formed a group united not only in the pursuit of letters and in the desire to give Liverpool an intellectual life of its own, but still more in political and social causes. Of Roscoe's political activities I shall have something to say later. For the moment it is enough to say that his group formed the rival to that which was united mainly by the common interest of the slave trade. The feeling between the two groups was so bitter that personal relations were often very seriously strained. But when any enterprise for the public service of Liverpool was in question Roscoe was the first to invite the co-operation of his standing opponents.

During these years his scientific enthusiasm for botanical studies combined with his old enterprise on Chat Moss to lead him to take an active part in those improvements in agricultural methods which were at this period being carried out very rapidly in England. He kept a model farm beside his country house. He studied with much care the methods of the reformers, especially of the greatest of them, Coke of Holkham, to whom he paid several visits. He read papers to local agricultural societies, and was specially requested by government to present a report on his own experiments on Chat Moss, a report which received the highest praise.

His assured position now also enabled him to extend his library and his collection of pictures, to accommodate which he built large additions to his house. His library was now an exceptionally fine one for a private owner. Its great strength was, naturally, in Italian literature and history, in which it included many rare treasures. But he now

became infected by enthusiasm for the study of the history of printing, and, at a period when such a collection was much easier to get together than it is to-day, he set to work to acquire a series of books which should serve to illustrate the development of the typographical art. Among these were many treasures.

His collection of prints and drawings, gradually accumulated during many years, was now of great extent and value, and he could boast that the history of the arts of etching and engraving were very fully illustrated by it. In painting, while he followed with an intelligent interest the work of his own age, he devoted himself mainly to getting together a collection representative of the early Italian schools, and thus illustrating the development of the pictorial art in its earliest home. This collection—the same which is now housed in the Walker Art Gallery—is a proof of the reality and intelligence of his enthusiasm for the fine arts, all the more striking because the items in it were attractive not so much for their own beauty, which is not such as to appeal to the uninstructed eye, as for the light they threw on the development which led to Michael Angelo and Leonardo.

The presence in Liverpool of such collections, and still more of the man who gave meaning and purpose to them, was an immense boon to a Philistine commercial town. But still greater were the direct public services which Roscoe rendered in helping to found institutions to communicate to his fellow-townsmen something of his own enthusiasm for the nobler interests of the human mind. Of these I can only give the barest catalogue. In 1784 he was one of the founders of the Society for promoting the Arts of Painting and Design, which was a

revival of the earlier society he had helped to found ten years before, and the precursor of the Liverpool Academy. This body, with the exception of the Royal Academy, was the first English organisation formed for these purposes, and its exhibitions not only did much to encourage local work, but brought to Liverpool paintings by Reynolds, Gainsborough, and others. Roscoe was successively Vice-President and President of this body. He himself contributed drawings to its exhibitions, etched the card of admission with his own hand, and read several papers before its members. He was one of the founders, and for a number of years the President, of the Literary and Philosophical Society, which may, indeed, be said to have sprung from those meetings for informal discussion of which he was the soul. The Literary and Philosophical Society still flourishes; but I shall not offend any of its members who may be here if I say that though the city has quintupled in population in the meantime, the proceedings of the Society have never since been of more interest and value than they were in Roscoe's time. He was for years one of the most active of the subscribing members of the Liverpool Library, a small circulating library which afterwards developed into the Lyceum, and was the first public collection of books in Liverpool. But as this did not pretend to be a scholars' library, and as such an institution was indispensable if the intellectual life of the city was to be worthily developed, Roscoe and his group in 1797 drew up a scheme on the basis of which, two years later, the Athenaeum was built, on a free site provided by the Corporation. Thus learning received its first permanent home in Liverpool. I do not need to say how great a service the

Athenaeum has performed during its existence in Liverpool. It has and respect for learning, alive in not the least of its merits has be maintained by the subscriptions o it has enlisted and stimulated the in circle of Liverpool men in these obje natural sciences, however, had not yet scheme for establishing a Botani Roscoe's enthusiastic support, an mainly due to his deep interest i was a subscriber to the fund req mainly responsible for drafting t administration, and he delivered, at 1802, a vigorous address on the duty community to encourage and mai studies.

The last of the public educationa which Roscoe engaged was the most in some ways the most fruitful of great need of Liverpool was an in should not only, like the Athenaeum, of study to those who were alre competent to undertake it; but form a means of diffusing that gathering together for discussion activities all who cared for such thin viding the guidance and training neither libraries alone nor the thirst alone can lead to the best results. friends did not venture to dream of scheme as the planting of a living the midst of the shops and warehous town, though there is no need to attitude would have been towards s Liverpool, indeed, needed long prepa

could be ready for so great a project; the respect for knowledge had to be much more widely diffused, and schools had first to be brought into existence. That visionary and prophet, who in 1836 is said to have proclaimed to the Town Council that the greatest need of the city was the establishment of a University, was so far ahead of his time that he was merely laughed at and disregarded. But though a University could not yet be dreamed of, something short of a University might yet be imagined which could perform one part of a University's function, that of stimulating and keeping alive the love of knowledge in its surrounding community; and so there came to birth the idea of the Royal Institution. Roscoe was not the originator of this bold and fruitful proposal. The first suggestion came in 1813 from his friend and physician Dr. Traill, who was second only to Roscoe himself in his enthusiasm for the intellectual awakening of Liverpool. But as chairman of the preliminary committee which drew up the scheme in detail, Roscoe took a large part in working it out, and it was his hand which wrote the admirable report which led to the actual establishment of the Institution in 1817. In this he took much the same part as his fellow-historian Charles Beard took in the establishment of University College. In the final stages of this work he was unable to play his full part, because he was distracted by the business troubles of which I shall presently have to speak. But at the opening, on November 25, 1817, he delivered a fine address in which lofty ideals were laid before the infant institution. It is no part of my purpose to describe the aims of the Royal Institution, or the extent to which they were realised. To Roscoe and many of his

friends it appeared the highest enterprise in which he had yet engaged, and one enthusiastic correspondent promised that this beginning would soon bring Liverpool to be the rival of Athens and of Florence. If the Royal Institution has not quite done that—if the form of its organisation was not such as to render possible all the results its founders hoped for—nevertheless it has been for nearly a century the focus of the intellectual life of Liverpool. And the character and aims of its founders are to be judged rather by what they hoped from it than even by the considerable work which it has achieved. Roscoe's address on this occasion forms perhaps the most direct expression of his view of the relation that ought to exist between the intellectual pursuits and the practical interests of a great commercial centre. The ideal community into which he hoped his native town would grow was one in which, as in his loved Florence, its members, while 'not slothful in business,' would be drawn by the very atmosphere of their surroundings to remember that business is not the whole of life or the best of it. 'It is to the union of the pursuits of literature with the affairs of the world,' he says, 'that we are to look for the improvement of both; for the stability and foundation of the one, and the grace and ornament of the other.' That is a striking saying. It means that, in Roscoe's view, the pursuits of learning and the love of art would not merely civilise a commercial community, but would actually themselves benefit by intimate association with the practical conduct of affairs, gaining in vitality and reality. I do not doubt he was thinking of the light which his own experience in business and politics had shed for him on the Florence of Lorenzo, and of the inspiration which

Florence and Lorenzo had given him for the conduct of his own active and busy life.

Roscoe's work for the amelioration of his town was not limited to the foundation of public institutions. Everything that tended in that direction got his support. His books were all printed in Liverpool, because he realised that the town which cannot produce books finely must remain a mere intellectual suburb of the town that can. Under his encouragement John McCreery, with whom his relations were as cordial as those of Scott with Ballantyne, produced typographical work of the very highest excellence. Liverpool has never since that date achieved anything to equal it. Indeed, before the establishment of the University Press, it was almost impossible to get a book of any serious pretensions accurately and well printed in Liverpool. In the same way, it was under Roscoe's encouragement that for a short time Liverpool became the home of the most beautiful binding. The work done by Jones, Roscoe's protégé, in binding the treasures of the Holkham library, earned the admiration of book-lovers who knew the best work of France. As Coke of Holkham wrote, a barbarous provincial town was coming to be known for every kind of literary enterprise. I cannot stop to enumerate all the unostentatious work of Roscoe in encouraging and helping talent wherever it appeared. One may allude to Gibson, perhaps the most famous English sculptor of his day, a Liverpool boy who owed to Roscoe his chance of showing the power that was in him ; or Richard Roberts, the marvellous Welsh lad who, in the midst of penury and filth, had contrived to obtain such a mastery of Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Arabic, French, German, Italian and Spanish, that on the

classical tongues he was able to baffle great scholar Dr. Parr. It was Rosco him, and took him into his house, a discovered that this linguistic freak w idiot in all other respects, found him ment, provided him with books and over him. These are outstanding e every lad of parts in Liverpool was su encouragement from the great patron who remembered the difficulties he had to encounter.

It would be pleasant to linger on th fruitful, aspects of Roscoe's work. But tation of his multifarious activity will no unless I find time to say something abou work. The first thing to be noted is no share in municipal affairs. This wa he was not willing to take his part important labours which the city can sons to perform ; but because he was n of the Borough. The freedom, at was confined to the sons and apprentice and all others were utterly excluded fr a few generals and one or two emine who had distinguished themselves in of the slave trade, and who were a gift of the honorary freedom in Roscoe's services were never consi deserving of this honour. And as fr might become members of the T —a body whose members sat for life all vacancies in their own numbe distinguished citizen of Liverpool w from taking any part in the govern native place. How much the city lost impossible to estimate : probably not m

if Roscoe had been admitted to the Council he would have found himself alone in a body which detested all his dearest ideas. The lack of the freedom also deprived him of the Parliamentary franchise, for none but freemen might vote in the election of a Member of Parliament. But by one of those curious anomalies which were the glory of the British Constitution, though Roscoe could not vote for a member, there was nothing to prevent his being himself elected as the representative of the borough. After Trafalgar, the panic fear and suspicion, which in the nineties had mastered most Englishmen and had almost driven Roscoe from any active participation in politics, had largely died down, and in 1806 Roscoe's political friends obtained Parliamentary power at Westminster. This reaction extended to Liverpool, and the Liverpool burgesses, remembering for a moment the lustre which their townsman had reflected on them, and forgetting their detestation of all his political ideas, returned him to Parliament triumphantly at the head of the poll. His membership lasted for only about eighteen months, for the Ministry was too weak and divided to be able to survive the death of its strongest member, Charles James Fox. But in that brief period one great reform was accomplished, and Roscoe had the satisfaction not only of giving his vote, but of making a powerful speech in favour of the abolition of the slave-trade. Not the least striking feature of that measure was that it had the vote and voice of one of the members for the town on which it was to inflict the greatest blow. Though they had known beforehand Roscoe's opinion on the question, the Liverpool voters found it impossible to forgive him. They were

persuaded that with the abolition o
trade the prosperity of the town wo
that in a very short time grass woul
in Castle Street. Their indignation
greater because their member had
their sentiments by speaking and vot
of Catholic emancipation, for Live
strongly Protestant then as now; a
zealots exhibited the fervour of t
convictions in much the same plea
When Roscoe returned, he was we
howling mob armed with bludgeons,
from among the fervid Protestants
partly from the crews of slaving sh
their occupation gone; and the riot w
was with difficulty quelled. Roscoe
again to become a candidate. This
not dictated either by pique or by
continued to take an active part in
and was the principal supporter of B
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But his main political work in the
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Pitt and his successors, subsequently
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London. Above all he took up wit
the great question of the treatment

and, going far beyond Romilly and Mackintosh, who aimed merely at removing some of the most ruthless acts from the English statute-book, he powerfully urged, in three pamphlets on Penal Jurisprudence which are still worth reading, that all punishment was useless, wasteful and cruel unless it was so devised as to bring about the reformation of the criminal: a view in which, ninety years ago, he was more than a century before his time.

But in the midst of all this wise and useful work his hitherto uninterrupted prosperity was broken by a sudden disaster. He had spent the best part of his life in showing how wisely affluence could be employed. Now he was to show with what dignity undeserved misfortune could be borne. In 1816 the termination of a war which had lasted so long that it had come to seem almost part of the order of nature brought about a sharp financial crisis. The banking business, into which Roscoe had been drawn by friendship, and whose affairs he had conducted with the most self-denying regularity, became the victim of a sudden panic; and, though perfectly solvent—its assets were computed to be more than £60,000 above its liabilities—was compelled to stop payment. Roscoe met his creditors manfully, and explaining the situation asked them to allow the bank to continue in operation for six years, and promised within that time to pay off all its obligations. But the credit of the bank had been shaken; its assets had to be realised at heavy losses and at the most inopportune moments; and the strain told more and more heavily on Roscoe's health and spirits: for he was now an old man of sixty-seven years, and the time for deserved rest had come. Some of his creditors took

out writs against him. He could easily have settled their claims, but that would have been dishonest to the other creditors who trusted him; and for some time he had to shut himself into his house on Chat Moss to avoid arrest, in order to be able to fulfil the obligations he had undertaken. After four years of this nerve-shattering work, he could stand the strain no longer, and resolved to give up the struggle. He allowed himself to be declared bankrupt, and gave up his house at Allerton and all his treasured collections of books and pictures, without reserve, to meet the liabilities of his firm. Nothing in this episode is more pathetic than the quiet heroism with which he set to work upon the laborious task of making a perfect descriptive catalogue of these cherished possessions, both in order that they might fetch the best prices possible, and in order that some memorial might be preserved of the delight and labour of his life. The sale brought very good prices; and his friends, eager to save something for him out of the wreck, subscribed together to buy in a selection of the less costly of his favourites. But Roscoe's pride refused to accept such a gift. At first he hoped that he would be left with sufficient means to repay them, and begged them to permit this; when that hope vanished, the most he would allow them to do was to present the collection to the Athenaeum, allowing him the user of part of it during his lifetime; and on the Athenaeum shelves the books stand to-day, among the most precious possessions of that valuable library.

His trouble over, he began serenely, at sixty-seven years, to make a new home for himself with the relics of his fortune, in a small house which he took in Lodge Lane; and, for the first time, turned to use his pen for his own immediate profit. An

elaborate edition of Pope, and a few other works, represent the fruit of these years; during which he also completed his great botanical monograph on the monandrian plants. Eleven years remained of his life; they were spent in these narrower circumstances with as much serene dignity as his earlier and more prosperous years. He lost his wife at a good old age, after forty years of unclouded happiness. He lost, one after another, all the friends of his middle life—the friends of his youth had gone long before. But new friends gathered round him, all the best that Liverpool could produce; and married sons and daughters surrounded him. In the little house in Lodge Lane he still maintained much of that domestic charm which had distinguished the mansion at Allerton, and of which I have had no occasion to speak. His last year or two were entirely peaceful. Partially helpless from a paralytic stroke, his work was at last over. He lay in a pleasant upper room, with books and statuary and pictures and flowers, counselling friends, corresponding with those at a distance, watching with undiminished interest the rising tide of a new political movement, which promised at last to realise his hopes, and above all, looking back, not without satisfaction, upon a full and well-spent life. It was one of his chief pleasures to think that he had left nothing unfinished. His edition of Pope, his revised editions of his historical books, his Penal Jurisprudence, and finally his botanical monograph, had all been completed before he became unable to work. He had a brief period of calm for retrospect, and then his life ended, very quietly, on June 30, 1831.

It is a very incomplete view which I have been able to give of this greatest of Liverpool citizens.

I have said nothing of his private life, which was distinguished by a grave kindliness which made his home beautiful; nothing of his deep, but reserved, religious beliefs; nothing of that genius for friendship which brought it about that through his life he never lost a friend once made. Our theme has been only, Roscoe the historian, and Roscoe the public-spirited citizen, and it is the relation of these two aspects which has chiefly concerned us.

Roscoe's historical work has not survived; for it is the fate of the historian to be superseded; it is especially the fate of the historian who writes to prove a case, or to serve a cause, or for any purpose other than the simple revelation of truth. Of all Roscoe's contemporaries or seniors Gibbon is the only historical writer who remains a classic. But I think Roscoe himself would have said that this did not matter. His historical labours served their end. They disclosed to the busy money-making England of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century some vision of a community which, not behind ours in the developments of commerce, yet kept alive other longings of men's minds than that for wealth. They afforded, above all, the inspiration for a career of civic usefulness whose visible results are large, whose indirect and spiritual results are still larger. To Roscoe, as to many other historians, the main value of historical studies was here, in its civic inspiration. And while one knows that history has many other gifts, and perhaps greater gifts, to give to her students, the clear demonstration which Roscoe's life affords of this one makes it a fine model for students of his subject and an inspiriting challenge to a historical teacher who finds himself called to be, in some measure, responsible for the cultiva-

tion and diffusion of the historic spirit in Roscoe's own city, and for conveying to the city as much as may be of the illumination and enlargement of vision that history can give. There is a phrase of Sir John Seeley's which might well serve as a motto or summary of Roscoe's life and influence, and might serve also as the motto of the teachers of history in a great, humming city, alive with social difficulties and opportunities. 'Citizenship,' it runs, 'without history is without root; history without citizenship is without fruit.'

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